



National Road in Maryland



LaVale: Improving Access and Approach to the Historic Toll House

The only remaining toll house in Maryland along the Historic National Road Scenic Byway is located in LaVale. The Toll House, restored and open to the public, provides an excellent opportunity for interpretation of the Historic National Road Scenic Byway. Allegany County has recently installed a park with covered pavilions and restrooms at the site, and parking is available. The old toll gates can be viewed, as well as a remnant section of the National Road. Braddock Run, a small creek, runs along the north side of the National Road across the street from the Toll House.

Over the years, however, a mix of motels, service stations, auto-supply stores and other commercial properties have obscured the historic character of the National Road in this area. Large signs compete with each other for the attention of through-traffic. The road has been widened to five lanes in sections, and traffic lights have been installed. Pedestrian access is limited.

There are several motels in the area including a Best Western, Super 8 and the historic Slumberland Motel that could provide a “built-in” visitor base to the historic Toll House. With improved pedestrian access, guests to the area would be able to stroll to LaVale Plaza and the Toll House, view interpretative displays, and learn more about the history of the National Road. Information could also be provided about other features along the road.

The enclosed plan illustrates ways for improving the access and approach to the historic Toll House. Goals include **narrowing the look and feel of the road** to calm traffic, **opening up and framing views, improving the appearance of the road and right-of-way**, creating **safe pedestrian access**, creating a **village green** and **interpreting the stories** of Braddock Run and the Toll House to visitors. A **stormwater runoff management and soil bioengineering demonstration project** is proposed for LaVale Plaza and Braddock Run to improve the water quality and appearance of the creek and parking lots. Connections should also be explored for future access to the Toll House from the **Allegheny Passage Trail**, which parallels the National Road in the vicinity of the Narrows.



Photograph by H. Laney

In 1916, author Robert Bruce included this photo of the toll house in a book on the National Road, noting the current road was wider and in better condition.



The restored toll house today with memorial plaque (Photo by J. Connors)



Maryland's Historic National Road Scenic Byway in LaVale, an unincorporated area in Allegany County west of Cumberland



1 View east at Merling Building.



Sketch of proposed streetscape improvements to open up views to Toll House: place utilities underground, consolidate signs, plant street trees at regular intervals where space permits. Pedestrian path provides access.



2 View of Braddock Run in foreground and LaVale Plaza in back, looking northwest from the National Road

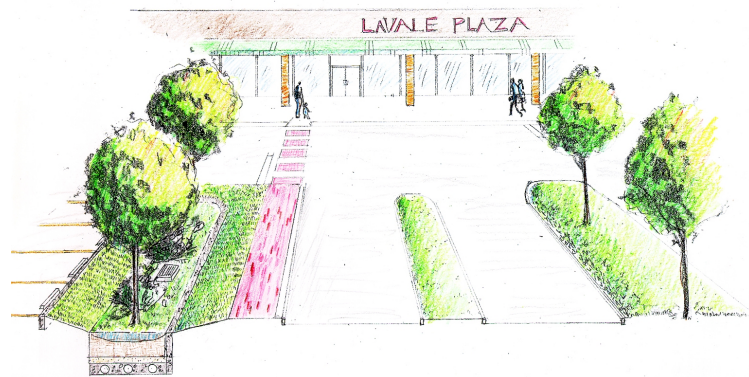


Diagram of LaVale Plaza entrance illustrating proposed improvements: a demonstration "bioretention" pond on left could be installed to filter parking lot runoff, with landscaped medians, and a brick path connecting the shopping center to the National Road.



Recommended streetscape, pedestrian safety, and environmental improvements to the National Road through LaVale:

Tree plantings - Rhythmic planting of roadside trees to frame views and narrow the look and feel of the road. Locate trees out of clear zones. Plant in pairs to increase visual impact.

Grass Medians - Replace center turning lane with grass medians where possible to narrow the look and feel of the road.

Crosswalks - Recommended brick-paver crosswalks at LaVale Plaza entrance and MD 53 Intersection to improve visibility and attractiveness of pedestrian crossing.

LaVale Plaza (Soil Environmental Quality Demonstration) - Plant trees in parking lot to reduce asphalt expanse. Install bioretention pond to filter runoff. Use bioengineering to filter remaining runoff and stabilize banks of Braddock Run.

Village Green - Create village green in between LaVale Plaza and Braddock Run to increase green space.

Underground Utility Wires - Place utility wires underground to open up views to the toll house and to lessen competing visual elements.

Separated Pedestrian Path - Install path to provide a safe pedestrian loop. The path follows Braddock Run on the north side and the old National Road alignment on the south side where possible. Path could resemble look and feel of old National Road, or use brick pavers for color. Include connecting path or sidewalk from National Road to LaVale Plaza entrance.

Signs - Consolidate signs and place on lower stone, brick, or wood bases. Text on signs should be 4"-5" high for legibility.

Interpretative Center - An exterior interpretive display at the Toll House would be used to teach visitors about life along the National Road since the early 1800's. Information about other toll houses, the mile markers, inns, bridges, and more could be incorporated into the existing embankment and landscaped park.



3 View west from Super 8 Motel entry drive toward gas stations and Maryland Discount Beverage Center. Toll House is up ahead on the left.



Sketch of proposed streetscape improvements: grass medians to narrow the look and feel of the road, street trees planted at regular intervals, signs lowered and placed on stone, wood, or brick bases, pedestrian path. Utilities have been placed underground.

